

# Managing Plastic Bags in Flagstaff

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JANUARY 12, 2016

# Background

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April 2007: Initial dialogue began on managing plastic bags in Flagstaff.

May 2012: City Council requests official recommendation from the Sustainability Commission on how to address plastic bags in Flagstaff.

Fiscal Year 14: Cinder Lake Landfill spends roughly \$114,000 to address plastic bags. Material Recovery Facility (MRF) lost roughly \$62,400 due to plastic bags in processing equipment.

March 2014: Sustainability Commission approves draft ordinance banning plastic bags (5-2 vote) as official recommendation to City Council.

January 2015: Interim City Manager develops Plastic Bag Focus Group to submit additional recommendations to City Council.

# Sustainability Commission

2008: Sustainability Commission and Sustainability Program conduct informal plastic bag survey:

- 86% of 2,000+ respondents agreed that plastic bags were the main component of litter in Flagstaff.

2008: Sustainability Commission and Sustainability Program partner with the Arizona Food and Marketing Association to bring Bag Central Station, a voluntary plastic bag recycling program to Flagstaff:

- 9 participating grocery stores in Flagstaff
- Inconsistent participation
- Limited data from stores and AFMA
- No reported impact at landfill or MRF

# Sustainability Commission's Recommendation for a Plastic Bag Ban

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Sustainability Commission voted 5-2 in favor of a plastic bag ban at all retail establishments in Flagstaff to address litter.

The intent was to protect, conserve and enhance Flagstaff's natural beauty and reduce costly negative impacts of plastic bags.

- Difficult to manage.
- Have negative implications on aesthetics, solid waste and stormwater.
- Contribute to unsightly litter on streets, sidewalks and waterways.
- Very few are effectively reused, recycled or properly disposed of.

Educational emphasis would have focused on the idea that plastic bags add to litter and make our community unattractive.

# Plastic Bag Focus Group

Suggested using a phased approach over the next 3 to 5 years, the goal was to:

- Reduce use of point of sale plastic bags
- Enhance civic pride by doing so

The group believes that solutions to the problem should address:

- Litter
- Behavior
- Cost associated with: Clean-up, MRF/landfill issues and alternatives to current system
- Environmental/ecological footprint: Wildlife, watershed and minimal impact

# Plastic Bags Focus Group

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## Phase 1

Draft and pass ordinance to reduce point of sale plastic bags. Ordinance will define clear phases, each one triggered by results of the previous phase. All phases will be completed in no more than 5 years. Ordinance will include education program, recycling program and fee or ban, if necessary, to achieve reduction in of point of sale plastic bags;

- Develop metrics of success;
- Develop statement to the community;
- Develop education program for businesses and community;
- Conduct audit/disclosure of bags at retail establishments.

# Plastic Bags Focus Group

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## Phase 2

Ordinance implementation begins including;

Recycling program implemented

Education Program Implemented (Education program will be implemented fully and continuously through private/public partnerships.)

Consistent recycling program at retail organizations

- Conduct evaluation to measure success including business survey;
- Results of evaluation trigger automatic implementation of a fee or a ban.

# Plastic Bags Focus Group

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## **Phase 3**

Evaluate results of Phase 2. Fee or ban is automatically triggered if goals are not achieved (most members agreed on an automatic trigger as an element of the ordinance. An example of a trigger could be a 75% participation rate among all retailers in a verified recycling program one year after the ordinance goes into effect. If this is not achieved then move to Phase 4).

## **Phase 4**

Fee or ban automatically triggered if goals are not achieved.



# Plastic Bags Focus Group

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## **Additional consideration**

Some members of the group advocate for an increase to the recycling education budget, from \$0.25 per resident to \$1.00 in the next budget cycle (fiscal year 17). Currently the Sustainability Program has \$12,370 (15% of its operating budget) allocated to recycling education.

# Questions?

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# Confused about recycling in Flagstaff?



Learn what goes where, download your collection schedule, receive holiday schedule notifications, and find out about special recycling events.

**Check out our new website and app at**  
**[www.flagstaff.az.gov/recycle](http://www.flagstaff.az.gov/recycle).**

